DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING PAPER

EXCISE

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Statement of the Issue

Decisions are needed soon on Morocco's request to buy 108 M-60 tanks and on a final go-ahead to begin delivering OV-10 aircraft in late January. [redacted] B1,A5

US-Moroccan Relationship. Morocco's strategic position and its generally moderate and cooperative position on regional and larger issues of importance to us have given our relations with Morocco particular significance. [redacted] B1,A5

— the security, stability, and economic development of Morocco;

— steady improvement of relations with Algeria [redacted] B1,A5

— a negotiated settlement of the Saharan issue;

— maintenance of our relations with key African nations;

— Moroccan cooperation (e.g., air transit) in our evolving Southwest Asia strategy; and

[redacted] B1,A5

The Sahara and US Arms Supply. [redacted] B1,A5

The US has not recognized Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara following Spanish decolonization there in 1975 but has accepted Moroccan administrative control. In the 1975-79 period we objected to the use of US arms in the Sahara because they were provided under the usual agreement that they would be used for self-defense. Consequently we refused to sell items which had particular relevance to that fighting. [redacted] B1,A5

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[redacted] B1, A5

The Present Policy. In October 1979 the President decided to sell Morocco certain limited military equipment including some items such as the OV-10 reconnaissance aircraft well suited to help the Moroccan armed forces defend against Polisario attacks in [redacted] Southern Morocco [redacted] A major purpose of this shift was to strengthen American efforts to persuade all concerned parties to negotiate a compromise peace settlement. B1, A5

[redacted]

The Current Request. Morocco's request last August to buy 108 M-60 tanks to meet its conventional defense needs has been under consideration [redacted] B1, A5 The tanks, which are not suitable for use in the Western Sahara, would give Morocco some marginal help in redressing Algeria's 2-1 tank advantage. The M-60s would not be ready for delivery for at least two years.

Time Constraint

Delivery of the OV-10s is scheduled to start the end of January 1981 [redacted] B1, A5

[redacted]

What We Are Doing and Why

Decisions on the OV-10 delivery and sale of the tanks are under active review. B1, A5 [redacted]

In the larger context, we have been attempting to use our more forthcoming arms sales policy to improve our [redacted] B1, A5 bilateral ties, to assist Morocco to defend its sovereign territory

against Polisario attacks, to impress upon the Polisario and its supporters that a military solution is not within their reach, and to place ourselves in [redacted] position with Morocco to urge movement toward a negotiated settlement. B1, A5

This policy has made [redacted] results. Morocco agreed to be present at the September session of the OAU ad hoc committee at which all the parties (Algeria, Polisario, and Mauritania) were present. Direct negotiations did not take place but Morocco's presence was a reversal of previous policy to boycott such OAU efforts. During the UNGA debate this fall, the Moroccan delegate affirmed Morocco's willingness to cooperate with OAU ceasefire efforts and to implement procedures designed to determine the free choice of the Western Saharan people. B1, A5

[redacted] B1, A5

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Drafted:NEA/AFN:CWNaas/TKuniholm:mar
11/21/80 ext 20714/20279

Clearance:NEA:MDraper
NEA:HSaunders

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